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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 643rd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 19 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. OUEDRAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4)

Second periodic report of Finlan (CRC/C/70/Add.3; HRI/CORE/1/Add.59/Rev.2; CRC/C/QFIN/2; written replies of the Government of Finland to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Taipale, Mr. Heikkilä, Ms. Siitari-Vanne, Ms. Lindroos, Ms. Heiliö, Ms. Sarvanto and Ms. Oinonen (Finland), took places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited Ambassador Huhtaniemi to introduce the members of the delegation.

3. Mr. HUHTANIEMI (Finland) introduced the Finnish delegation and invited Ms. Taipale, the head of the delegation to present Finland's report.

4. Ms. TAIPALE (Finland) said that the protection and promotion of children's rights was an essential part of Finnish human rights policy. Finnish child rights legislation had been largely drafted and reformed on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had entered into force for her country in 1991. While the Convention enjoyed almost universal acceptance, there was still a need to monitor implementation of the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, and her delegation looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the Committee in that regard. She was impressed by the Committee's detailed study of Finland's second periodic report which, together with the Government's written replies, spelled out the legislative and administrative reforms achieved since 1998.

5. Her country had lately signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which represented an important step in enhancing the protection of children's rights. Finland had actively participated in the preparatory working groups on the Protocols and national measures were afoot for their ratification in 2001. The Conscription Act had been amended to prevent both male and female volunteers and conscripts under 18 from entering military service.

6. Like other Nordic countries, Finland was dismayed at the rapid spread of child pornography via the Internet and had taken national and international measures for its prevention. The production, distribution and possession of such material was punishable under the Penal Code, and new provisions on sexual offences in general which had entered into force in 1999 made it a criminal offence to procure the sexual services of a minor under 18. The country had finalized a programme of action for the prevention of the commercial sexual abuse of children in December 1999.

7. With regard to child labour, Finland had signed International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which would enter into force for the country in January 2001. Child labour was prohibited in Finland and temporary work by youngsters was strictly regulated by the amended Young Employees Act. Under the Finnish Constitution and legislation, persons under 18 were not entitled to undertake any form of work covered by ILO Convention No. 182.

8. Many developments had taken place in national legislation and administration since 1998 where Finnish child policy and legislation were concerned. Finland's consistent family policy traditionally provided children with comfortable living conditions. The country with the world's lowest infant mortality rate, Finland's birth rate was one of the highest in Europe and its teenage abortion rate was minimal. Day care was available to all children. The Finnish welfare state was founded on the principle of provision of the entire array of basic services for all, a situation that had further improved in recent years. The family as an institution had remained unchanged despite societal changes that had undermined the concept of the family. A report entitled "Finnish Child" submitted to the Committee contained recent statistics of society from the child's point of view. The rights of children belonging to national minorities - principally Sami and Roma - were protected by special legislation.

9. The best interests of the child had long been paramount in Finnish child policy and legislation, as evidenced by the 1983 Child Custody and Right of Access Act and Child Welfare Act, both consistent with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The definition of child custody - the aim of which was to ensure that children were cared for according to their individual needs, enjoyed affectionate relationships and a stimulating educational environment and received the supervision appropriate to their age and maturity - was one criterion for assessing a child's best interests with regard to custody, access and welfare. Although the Convention had long been applicable as law in Finland and appeared in the Statutes, its provisions on children's best interests and their right to express an opinion had been deliberately reproduced in the Act on the Status and Rights of Clients Using Social Welfare Services, due to enter into force in January 2001, in order to encourage all parents and social workers to give them due attention.

10. The 1995 revised provisions on fundamental rights, which set forth the principle that fundamental rights belonged to all natural persons residing in Finland, had been incorporated into the new Constitution, which had entered into force in March 2000. The Constitution guaranteed that children should be treated as equal individuals and allowed to express their views in all matters affecting them, according to their maturity. While children were explicitly mentioned in the provisions on social security and freedom of expression - with some age restriction regarding the right to vote - others, such as those concerning the right to free education, concerned them especially although they were not specifically mentioned.

11. The right to education was a cornerstone of Finnish child policy. The legislation on schools had been amended early in 1999 to ensure that all fundamental rights relating to education were exercised equally in all regions and all educational establishments. It defined more clearly a pupil's rights and duties, including the right of upper secondary students to be heard in decisions affecting them significantly. The new legislation further laid down children's right to - and the obligation of education providers to ensure - a mentally and physically safe school environment and to apply to the school of their choice.

12. The pre-school education reform which had taken effect in August 2000 provided for at least 700 schooling hours per child in the year preceding compulsory education through a system of subsidies to municipalities. Although 90 per cent of needs were already covered voluntarily by municipalities, by August 2001 they would all be obliged to make such arrangements, without prejudice to a child's right to day care under the Children's Day Care Act. Furthermore, Parliament's recent system for evening out child welfare costs, whereby municipalities would receive State subsidies to ease their burden, would be closely monitored, and its adequacy in ensuring services to all children in need would be assessed.

13. Although children requiring special care were protected under the Mental Health Act, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health was preparing a reform of the child welfare legislation in an effort to establish treatment units for children with special needs stemming from substance-abuse or crime-related problems. Children's mental health problems were currently the subject of discussion at the national and local levels. The European Court of Human Rights had recently pronounced judgement in three child welfare cases involving Finland. In two it had accepted the Government's view, although it had ruled in one case that the court proceedings had been excessively long and in the other that the domestic court had not provided an oral hearing. In the third case the Court had ruled against Finland, which had requested a referral to the Grand Chamber, as the case would constitute an important precedent for subsequent application of the Child Welfare Act.

14. The 1999 Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum-Seekers required reception centres to provide minors with services appropriate to their age and maturity and the authorities to provide the approximately 100 children who arrived in Finland unaccompanied every year with a legal representative to protect their various interests. Also, the amended Aliens' Act provided for greater attention to the requirements of a child's best interests, development, health and expression of opinion, for a more detailed definition of a family member and for residence requirements based on family ties. A later amendment provided for DNA-testing for establishing such ties in an effort to reduce the traffic in persons. The current reform of the Finnish Nationality Act would make children equal before the law regardless of their birth, and would reduce from 15 to 12 the age at which a child's opinions could be taken into account.

15. Where planned legislative projects were concerned, one which most affected young people was a proposed amendment to the Penal Code concerning general principles of law. While the age of liability would remain at 15, sentences imposed on minors under 18 would be reduced: the maximum sentence for a crime punishable by life imprisonment decreased from 12 to 10 years' imprisonment and a special juvenile sentence was provided for offences where a fine or imprisonment was considered inappropriate.

16. In conclusion, she said that Finland was determined to prohibit sexual abuse of children in any environment. Accordingly, the Ministry of Justice had recently set up a working group to examine how the legislation could be amended to provide for investigation of the background of applicants for jobs involving children so as to ensure that no person convicted of a sexual offence could be recruited.

17. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the delegation of Finland and invited the Committee members to put questions concerning general measures of implementation and the definition of the child.

18. Ms. RILANTONO thanked the delegation for its comprehensive opening statement and the frank and constructive written replies provided by the Government. She applauded the fact that the country's non-governmental organizations had been able to air their views at a meeting in 1998, thereby increasing their involvement in the preparation of the second periodic report. She also commended the fundamental changes in the implementation of the Convention, encouraged by the 1995 legislative reform. The country's economic recovery following the 1990 recession had also improved the situation of children, although many challenges remained to be addressed. Despite the State party's compliance with most of the Committee's recommendations in 1996, one matter of concern was the fact that coordination of the many child welfare activities undertaken by diverse administrative sectors was not the prime task of any ministry. Although an office of Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsman had been created, there was still need for an office that dealt specifically with children's rights.

19. She was pleased to learn that a training programme for childcare workers had been included in the continuing education programme at the University of Helsinki; how did the Government plan to train professionals such as law enforcement officers, judges and mental health officers.

20. Turning to the question of children's views being heard, she asked about implementation of the Act on the Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Child Custody and Right of Access. Certain sources had confirmed that children's views were heard in some cases, with the exception of children in custody. She hoped that the Government Bill for the amendment of the Aliens' Act, expected to be passed in December 2000, would increase the opportunity for children to express their views.

21. Mr. DOEK commended Finland for its efforts to combat child labour; it had been one of the first countries to ratify ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and was an important donor to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

22. However, many questions remained about the effects of decentralizing Government to the municipal level. In coordinating implementation of the Convention, for example, how was it ensured that differences did not constitute discrimination, and how did the system work in practical terms? If the child welfare budget had been cut down to ease the burden on municipalities, and that the municipalities were receiving additional financial support from the central Government, what was the proportion of each party's contribution? He also inquired whether conditions were attached to Government grants.

23. Lastly, he would like to know the outcome of the State party's decision to entrust the Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsmen with children's matters before determining whether a children's ombudsman was necessary.

24. Ms. MOKHUANE noted that in its reply to question 5 of the Committee's list of issues (CRC/C/Q/FIN/2), the Government indicated that a child policy programme was implemented in 150 of the 400 municipalities; she asked about the situation in the remaining ones. She would also like to know the reason for the delay in translating the Convention into the Roma language, an issue which had been taken up with the State party by the Human Rights Committee in 1988. Could the delegation clarify the Government's position on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict?

25. Mr. FULCI said that the State party had an effective system of checks and balances with regard to children's rights which involved both Government and non-governmental sectors and that the fair distribution of wealth in Finland had had a positive impact on children's welfare. The Committee appreciated the fact that the State party referred in its report to the Committee's previous recommendations. However, not all recommendations had been followed and some gaps could be detected in the information provided.

26. A report by an NGO, the Central Union for Child Welfare, stated that a compendium relating to children's rights had been published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finnish and English but was now out of print. He wondered whether that situation would be remedied and also whether the Government intended to address the need for training professionals, such as social workers, teachers and lawyers, a point raised by the same NGO.

27. Ms. SARDENBERG asked whether the State party intended to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.59/Rev.2) stated that the province of the Åland Islands enjoyed "internationally guaranteed autonomy". She asked what was meant by that expression and how the Government of the Åland Islands was organized. What was the region's relationship with the central Government and how was the Convention implemented there?

28. Although the economy had picked up, unemployment levels remained high. What was the basis for the statement that the impact of the recession had not been as significant as expected? Had any studies been done in that regard, and what was the correlation between unemployment and the economic recovery?

29. She would like to know the reason for the delay in setting up the office of the Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsman and whether there was coordination between the activities of the different Ombudsmen. Did they each deal with children's issues?

30. Ms. KARP asked the number of children under 16 years in Finland and why 15 was used as a reference whereas the Convention defined a child as a person under 18. She complimented the State party on its pioneering child-focused statistics, and expressed interest in knowing how the data collection system functioned. Perhaps Finland had advice to offer other States parties in that regard.

31. Over and above translating the Convention as a formal document into the different languages, she wondered whether its underlying principles had been presented as relevant to everyday life, which she believed was fundamental to the spirit of the Convention. Had

discussions about the Convention focused on the coordination between ombudsmen and had the issue of the lack of a Government focal point been raised? Although the State party was to be commended on several scores, she had the impression that its treatment of children's issues was more fragmented than holistic.

32. Mr. RABAH, quoting the statement in the report (CRC/C/70/Add.3 that one of the greatest challenges in the field of family law would be the harmonization of the law with the changed family structure, asked whether there was difficulty in harmonizing Finnish law in general with the Convention's provisions. He wondered how the independence of the ombudsmen was guaranteed and asked the difference between the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Chancellor of Justice.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

33. Ms. TAIPALE (Finland) said that Finland had a long tradition of local independence. Political commitment was strong in small municipalities as they were responsible for providing various services such as primary and specialized health care, library services, facilities for the disabled and day-care centres. A comprehensive reform at the beginning of the 1990s had resulted in increased grants to municipalities, which, although bound to act in accordance with the law, were allowed flexibility in its implementation.

34. The State subsidy system was rather complicated. For instance, in the area of social welfare and health, the size of government grants depended on the economic situation of the municipality. Municipalities had the power to levy income taxes, which financed services, with the Government supplying the shortfall. However, during the recession, the State's contribution had been reduced by half, making it difficult for municipalities to honour their commitments. Nevertheless, poor municipalities could be subsidized by over 50 per cent, in some instances. It had been suggested that the system should be modified to give the State more control, as was the case in the other Nordic countries.

35. A 10-year assessment of the independence of the municipalities in the provision of services had shown that the difference in their expenditures had decreased rather than increased. Municipalities were very eager to expand and develop the level of services they could provide. Quality assurance systems had been established, and the quality of care, guidance, and equipment was nationally regulated. Some municipalities were more efficient than others, and could provide greater care with the same amount of funds. A national information system, accessible on the Internet, had been established, and districts could easily study and compare the quality and efficiency of other programmes, a service of particular interest to the hospital districts.

36. Although the independence of the municipalities in the provision of care had been largely successful, Parliament was seeking to impose more control over them. It also was taking measures to increase funds for children's mental health. Although the 11 provincial boards that governed the 250 or so independent municipalities had been merged into five, local offices had not been closed or moved, and continued to cover the same regions; the streamlining of the provincial boards had not significantly affected the provision of services.

37. The use of the phrase "cutting down" was a mistranslation: in fact the child welfare system was increasing funds for child welfare. The Government had not yet established an official translation of that new concept.

38. The Child Welfare Act gave municipalities the responsibility for children's living conditions, and municipalities, in turn, had established child welfare policies. Her office, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, was offering guidance in that process, while not actually handing down decisions. The matter of coordination was a complex one, since more and more ministries were involved in planning for child welfare. And yet, since the country was small, people belonged to the same circles and networks, and the system somehow worked.

39. NGOs had such a strong role in decision-making at all levels that they were jokingly referred to as the biggest party in Parliament. The Finnish Government had created a programme under which NGOs owned all the slot machines in the country, which provided them with independence and a financial basis for their activities.

40. Mr. HEIKKILÄ (Finland) said that the recession of the early 1990s had been the most severe since the Second World War. Surprisingly, however, the overall poverty rate had increased only half a per cent, and the poverty rate was not higher than average for families with children. Studies were still under way on the consequences of that recession for Finnish society; there was no evidence of any lasting impact. The poverty risk increased when there were more than two children per family, but the average Finnish family was well below that figure. Both during and after the recession, the poverty rate had been low and the unemployment rate high throughout the society. In general, adults with small children tended to maintain their employability, demonstrating that motivation was an essential factor. In fact, there were families in which children had never seen adults go to work, essentially creating a culture of poverty: that question was a sensitive one in Finland.

41. There were three types of families: traditional nuclear families, unmarried couples who were cohabiting, and single-parent families, headed mostly by mothers. In Finland's view, society must adapt the provision of social benefits to the changing social reality: it should make no difference whether parents were married or whether adults caring for children were their biological parents. Under the comprehensive child welfare system, however, the level of support paid to families was related to household income, and that could be difficult to establish if adults were cohabiting or not in fact biological parents. An adult sometimes made a claim at a social welfare office without mentioning the existence of another adult in the household, for instance.

42. Ms. HEILIÖ (Finland) said that the Finnish Government had instituted a system designed to make it easy for parents to settle matters regarding the care and guardianship of their children, and in particular, to ensure that children had real parents, regardless of whether or not they were married. Finnish legislation currently provided that a cohabiting father could appear before the social welfare board and "confess" his paternity. If there was no reason to suspect the truth of his "confession", it would be forwarded to the courts, which would confirm paternity. Men who "confessed" to fatherhood were not necessarily their children's guardians. Parents could, however, make agreements regarding the father's guardianship, which would then be legally confirmed by the social welfare board.

43. Ms. TAIPALE (Finland) said that since the Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsman performed special functions regarding children and since many NGOs were active in that area, it was unlikely, in the current political atmosphere, that a separate children's ombudsman would be created. At any rate, no provision had been made for such a purpose in the current budget.

44. Ms. SIITARI-VANNE (Finland) said that, under the terms of the Finnish Constitution, the Parliament appointed the Parliamentary Ombudsman for a period of four years, and that only Parliament was empowered to dismiss him. The powers of the Ombudsman were related to the rights of citizens, and provisions pertaining to his responsibilities could be established by law. The Ombudsman held the primary responsibility for protecting the rights of persons in prisons and mental institutions and of members of the armed forces.

45. Ms. TAIPALE (Finland) said that, although professional training had been a particular goal of women in Finnish society, and although all health and welfare services were staffed by professionals, further work was called for in the area of specialization in children's rights.

46. Ms. LINDROOS (Finland) said that new legislation adopted in early 1999 had taken into consideration the children's rights standpoint. At all educational levels - local, provincial, and national - schools were required to conduct their own evaluations to determine to what extent the goals of the curricula had been fulfilled; those findings were incorporated into legislation, which consequently reflected the real needs of children. The national board of education was responsible for designing the national curriculum, which was used locally throughout the country.

47. The Convention had been incorporated into the curricula of teacher-training programmes at all educational levels, and training programmes directly related to children's rights had been set up at provincial, local and alternative schools. Training programmes in children's rights had also been launched for municipal decision makers.

48. Ms. HEILIÖ (Finland) said that, while not entirely satisfactory, the measures taken to provide special training on the Convention for persons dealing with children were a good start. Examples included seminars for child welfare social workers, three-day training courses on the best interests of the child for administrative court judges who dealt with child welfare, and annual refresher courses for judges from civil courts, who heard cases related to child custody and other family matters. The idea that legislation should be interpreted in the light of the Convention was gaining currency in Finland. A retraining programme was under way for forensic psychiatrists, with a focus on how to hear the wishes and determine the best interests of the child in cases involving criminal behaviour in the family, in particular sexual abuse or ill-treatment. The child psychiatric unit was regularly consulted in the most difficult cases involving child abuse and custody. Its specialists were currently researching new methods of interviewing children in such cases. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health conducted a vast programme called the Networking Project for Special Social Services, which was aimed at supporting small, rural communities in dealing with social welfare cases, and the specialists who underwent such specialized training were an integral part of that project.

49. Ms. OINONEN (Finland) said that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs published human rights instruments and Finland's periodic reports to the various treaty bodies in a publication

series, and had also issued a special publication devoted to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had enjoyed a great deal of success. Another publication called "United Nations Human Rights Instruments" included the text of the Convention, along with others, and was distributed free of charge. The text of the Convention was also available in various Finnish law books, which contained a special section on basic rights and human rights, in libraries, and through public databases accessible in Finnish, Swedish and English at schools and other public places. The Government intended to ratify both optional protocols to the Convention within a year, following which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs would issue new publications including those texts as well.

50. The Convention had been issued in Finnish and Swedish, the two national languages, and also in Northern Sami, which was by far the most prevalent Sami language. Although nearly all the Roma children in Finland spoke Finnish as a mother tongue, the Government was considering its translation into Romany, as it was important to disseminate the Convention in all the minority languages.

51. Ms. TAIPALE (Finland) said that the Finnish Government had recently adopted a new approach to statistics, which placed the child, rather than the household, at the centre of statistical analysis The new approach offered information, for instance, on the average distance between a child's place of residence and that of his grandparents or other relatives.

52. Ms. SARDENBERG recalled that, in its concluding observations on Finland's initial report, the Committee had noted its concern at the insufficient attention paid to the need for an efficient coordination mechanism between various ministries, as well as between the central and local authorities (municipalities), in the implementation of policies relating to the rights of the child. Since that time, the lack of a focal point or single ministry responsible for the implementation of the Convention had remained problematic, according to some NGOs. Coordination was especially important in the case of the Convention because its implementation involved numerous sectors. It was therefore critical for the Government to be aware of the various perspectives and of the need effectively to integrate them in implementing its policies. Given the extremely complex nature of the rights of the child, one might wonder what impact the lack of central coordination had had on the implementation of the Convention.

53. While it was a step in the right direction to assign the rights of the child and children's issues to the Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsman the statement that Finland was unable to establish an ombudsman's office specifically for children owing to economic reasons was difficult to understand. The title of "assistant" left some doubt as to the priority given to children's issues. Did the Assistant Parliamentary Ombudsman have a specific mandate to handle such matters? What exactly were the Ombudsman's terms of reference?

54. Unemployment, even if it affected very few families, was a serious factor that must be taken into consideration, as each and every child was of concern to the Convention. While it was laudable that the Government monitored the situation of children whose parents had never held a job, it would be interesting to know what links existed between such monitoring and effective and practical public policies to help such families. Did any of the three human rights research institutions mentioned in paragraph 24 of the periodic report devote studies to the situation of such children or such families? The question of the importance of social and biological

parenthood was of much interest, as throughout the world situations were becoming more prevalent in which divorced, separated, unmarried or remarried parents raised children with varying degrees of biological relationship in the same household. Had any research been conducted into the legal and other situations of such children, with a view to drawing up public policies to address their needs? With reference to the Åland Islands, she said that Finland as a State party was obliged to ensure the implementation of the Convention throughout its territory, regardless of the autonomous status of any part of the country. Lastly, was it true, as she had read in the documentation provided by an NGO, that the word "child" had been eliminated from the State nomenclature?

55. Mr. DOEK asked the delegation's opinion of a proposal put forward by the Central Union for Child Welfare for the establishment of an intersectoral board within the Government to deal with children's issues. The Committee had been informed that the incomes of families without children had risen in the past decade, while the incomes of those with children had fallen, sometimes by a great deal. He would appreciate comments from the delegation about that trend. According to the periodic report, some two thirds of accidents involving children were preventable. What had been the effectiveness of the measures taken to reduce such accidents? The periodic report addressed the question of the right to identity for adopted children who sought information about their natural parents, but made no mention of policy with regard to the rights of children conceived through artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization. Were they entitled to information about their biological fathers?

56. In a recent case brought before the European Court of Human Rights entitled "K. and T. v. Finland", the Court had been called upon to decide whether the authorities in Finland had violated the right to respect of family life of a mother who had been deprived of her children, including one immediately at birth, because of mental disorders. It was difficult to assess the best interests of the child in such cases. Was there any special procedure involving social workers and other experts to assist in that task? The European Court had in its judgement expressed concern that the Social Welfare Board had not sufficiently considered alternatives to the removal of the child from the mother's care. There was reportedly concern in Finland about the level of efforts and resources devoted to family support activities with a view to keeping children in their homes. Had the Court's decision led to any discussion of the need for intensive family support services?

57. Ms. RILANTONO supported the suggestion of the Finnish NGO concerning a multisectoral council for child policy. She had heard of a youth council for art and culture, and inquired as to whether that body included the participation of children's groups. Lastly, did children in Finland always have the last name of their fathers, or could they opt to take their mothers' last names?

58. Ms. KARP asked whether the Government was considering changing its statistical methodology to cover children up until the age of 18 instead of 15, and what steps had been taken to change data collection methods to give better consideration to children's perspectives. The delegation had informed the Committee that every municipality must have a child policy. In her opinion, it was important for the Government to elaborate such a policy at the national level. Communities and municipalities could then adapt their policies to meet local needs.

59. According to the new legislation on education, children in upper secondary schools were ensured the right to participate and to have their views heard. Did that mean that children at lower educational levels did not enjoy such rights, and if so, was that because it was considered that they were unable to express their points of view? The part of the periodic report devoted to article 6 of the Convention presented information on the right to life and survival, but made no mention of policy on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and mental development. Such a policy might relate to the child in accordance with his or her personal capacities, or define certain children's age groups, which generally corresponded to various capacities. By granting the right to participate and have their views heard exclusively to children in upper secondary schools the authorities appeared to be giving little importance to the subjective, personal capacities of the child. She would like to know how children's right to development was implemented in Finland. How were evolving capacities defined, and how were resources allocated to meet needs?

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.